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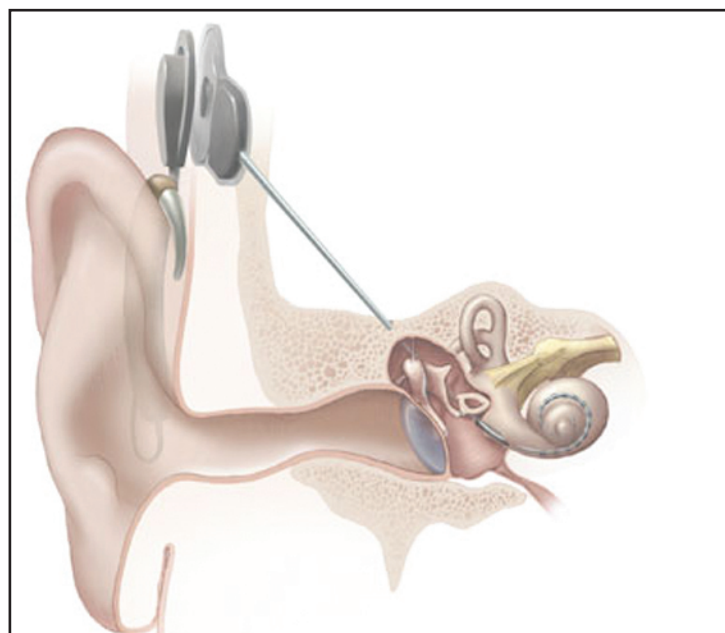
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Cochlear implant program on Aruba continues with second wave of procedures

Minister of Public Health and Sports, Dr. Richard Visser, joined Gladys Lopez, President of Quota Club of Aruba for the announcement at the second set of Cochlear implants performed by a team from Europe led by Dr. Robert Stokroos of Maastricht Medical School, Auditory Division. Working with them on the program is locally based ear, nose and throat specialist Dr. Steven Cabenda.

The first set of procedures



Cochlear implant

were performed in September of last year, when 4 youngsters ranging in age from 3 to 9 years old with severely impaired hearing received the

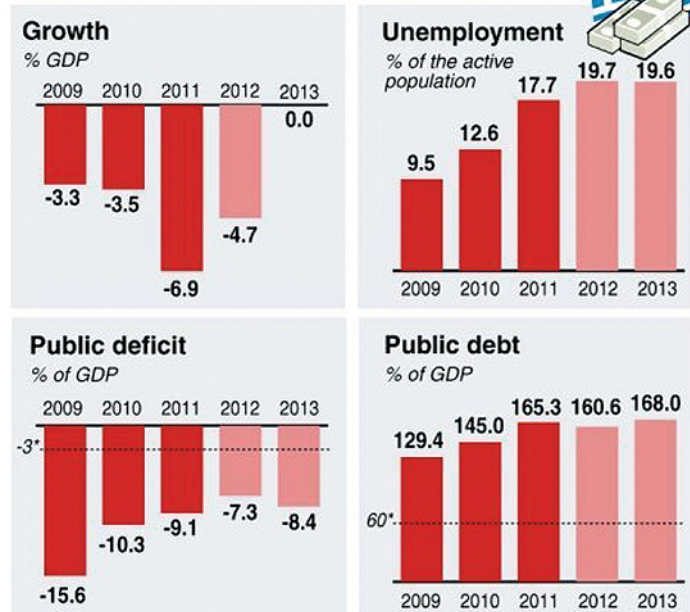
implants; the operations were allowed under the AZV, Aruba's national health plan.

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Greek crisis deepens with no breakthrough in coalition talks

Greece: key data

European Commission spring economic forecast



*Limit fixed by European Stability and Growth Pact

Source: European Commission AFP

ATHENS (AFP) - Greek political party leaders emerged late Sunday from emergency cabinet talks with no breakthrough in sight, raising the prospect of new elections that could scupper reforms and force the country out of the eurozone.

President Carolos Papou-

lias initially met for 90 minutes with the heads of the three parties that topped last Sunday's inconclusive election -- conservative New Democracy, socialist Pasok, and radical left Syriza, before holding discussions with smaller parties.

But after the full day of

last-ditch meetings, the small Democratic Left party, viewed as the most likely candidate for a coalition government with New Democracy and Pasok, said no government had emerged from Sunday's discussions.

Talks will reopen today, said state TV, as Greece grapples with mounting threats of a loan freeze should Athens falter on promised structural reforms.

If a cabinet cannot be formed by Thursday, when parliament convenes, new elections will have to be called in June.

According to local media, the state has enough cash to pay salaries and pensions until late June. Greece's European peers have threatened to cut off further loans if promised reforms stall.

"The president told me that sadly, until this point there has been no potential to form a unity government," said Fotis Kouvelis, whose Democratic Left party was seen as the most likely candidate for a coalition government between the mainstream conservative and socialist parties.

Romney adamantly rejects same-sex marriage



LYNCHBURG, Virginia (AFP) - Republican White House challenger Mitt Romney, wooing social conservatives, has adamantly rejected same-sex marriage and trumpeted his belief in Christian values and the family.

Three days after Barack Obama became the first US president to back gay and lesbian marriage, Romney told

university graduates that the "pre-eminence of the family" remains at the heart of the principles that underpin the nation.

"As fundamental as these principles are, they may become topics of democratic debate," the presumptive Republican nominee told Saturday the class of 2012 at Liberty University, the biggest Christian campus in the United States.

"So it is today with the enduring institution of marriage. Marriage is a relationship between one man and one woman," he said, raising a loud cheer from a crowd of more than 25,000 -- the biggest so far in this campaign season.

Continue on pg 7

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Cochlear implant program on Aruba continues with second wave of procedures

Continued from pg 1



Dr. Cabenda, Gladys Lopez, Dr. Visser, Dr. Stokroos, Quota Volunteer and Lucas Lehning

Dr. Stokroos returned last week to Aruba to implant the devices on Thursday and Friday, May 10 and 11, in 4 more children and one 49-year-old adult, each procedure costing around 90,000 Aruban florins (\$51,428.)

according to Dr. Visser.

Also returning to Aruba was Lucas Lehning, Senior Regional Manager for MED EL, a German company, which manufactures the implanted device. He performed the fine-tuning of the device

to accommodate the individual requirements of each patient. He also followed up on the 4 previous implants, testing their viability and the efficiency for the needs of that group of patients. He explained that the current tech-

nology feeds information via computer to the manufacturer, allowing them to monitor the stimulation to the patients' cochlear and tweak performance all the way from Europe.

Aruba's Quota Club has

long advocated protecting one's hearing; they conduct several campaigns during the year, particularly at Carnival time, to make the public aware of guarding against ear damage caused by high decibels commonly occurring during concerts and carnival parades, particularly among children.

Mr. Lehning explained the devices do not provide the full range of sound as normal hearing, but those with the implants do receive enough stimulation to the hair follicles in the cochlear to provide information to the brain, which actually "hears." "It is very important to have that stimulation to the brain for a child with profound hearing impairment to develop," he stated. "The implants allow them to lead almost perfectly normal lives."

Cochlear implants are new for Aruba, and its sister island of Curacao, which decided to implement the program by sending those needing implants to Holland for the procedure. Both Dr. Cabenda and Minister Dr. Visser agreed it much less expensive to bring a team to the island to perform the implants rather than pay to send all the patients to Holland and house them there for the time they need to recover.

Dr. Cabenda stated figures show about 1 baby a year is born on Aruba with the type of severe hearing impairment that will benefit from the implants. The plan is to bring the team back once a year to perform around 3-4 procedures. Not all those who are hearing impaired will necessarily be helped by this particular device and method; it depends entirely on the reason for the hearing loss.

Rosalie Klein

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StampiAruba show at Van Dorp Bookstore in Dakota



Brilliant Butterflies from around the world



An entire collection dedicated to Princess Di



first issues ensembles marking historic moments for Aruba

the post office for the day a new stamp is unveiled and offered to the public. These are of high value to collectors, and one entire wall presents a march through history of moments that greatly impacted Aruba, including the first KLM flight and the opening of the Aruba Caribbean Resort over 50 years ago.

Aside from the stunning homage to nature which comprises a number of collections, there is an entire wall of commemoratives dedicated to Princess Di, as well as other noted personages, though it appears she had a particularly enduring popularity.

If visiting the Van Dorp bookstore over the next two weeks don't miss the opportunity to enjoy this charming display, you just might become a convert.

Rosalie Klein

Island philately fanatics uniting under the banner of StampiAruba Society, are providing ample reason for their passion for stamp collecting and the history this hobby embodies during a

branch of the Van Dorp Bookstore, which opened on Saturday, May 12.

StampiAruba members meet there once a month, comparing collections and discussing the latest trends

ensembles, a special combination of stamps and coordi-

nated envelope and cancellation stamp commissioned by



Stamp enthusiast Ruben Abath

two-week show at the Dakota

among philately aficionados.

The current collection on display demonstrates the breathtaking beauty possible in these mini artworks, particularly the bird and butterfly ensembles of Ruben Abath. He explained that several islands have actually made commemorative and artistic stamp issues a financial niche in their nations' economies, participating in international shows and creating specially commemoratives for these annual events, which are in high demand.

There are some fascinating collections of first issue



Celebrate Freely

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Afl. 40.000 given to charity! Savaneta Marines Camp had very successful open day



On May 1st, The Savaneta Marines Camp had their annual open day activities. They reported having an excellent and very successful day with as many as 21.000 visitors.

During this traditional day, the Dutch Marine Corps and Coast Guard showed the public what their various daily tasks are. It is the Marine Corps' tradition to donate all the proceeds of the


open day to charity. This year they chose the Clown Doctors Foundation and the "Mi Por" foundation to donate the proceeds of the day.

Both of these foundations gladly received Afls.20.000 each from the hands of the Commander of the Marines, Major Peter Damen.

During the open day they also had a raffle of different prizes. Various local sponsors cooperated by donating different prizes. They expressed their appreciation and gratitude for the marvelous support they received from these sponsors.


Below are the winning # of the lottery of prizes. All prizes may be collected at the Savaneta Marines Camp up to June 1st between 6:30 am to 3:00pm at their main entrance. The telephone number at the Camp is: 522-5503:

Mise a Place	Dinner for two at CILO City Lounge	00772
Tiara Air	2 Return tickets to Curaçao	02882
MC group Aruba	Basket of food valued at AWG 250,-	08023
Superfood	Gift Coupon Superfood for AWG 125	07540
Superfood	Gift Coupon Superfood for AWG 125	06670
Superfood	Gift Coupon Superfood for AWG125	07281
Superfood	Gift Coupon Superfood for AWG 125	01224
Maduro Travel Aruba	2 Return tickets ARU-MIAMI-ARU incl. 3 hotel nights stay	07282
Boolchands	Ipad 3 16 GB	02463
Boolchands	Pandora bracelett	06927
KLM	1 Return ticket ARU-AMS-ARU	02471
SEAruba Fly 'n Dive	1 x gift certificate introduction dive	04900
SEAruba Fly 'n Dive	1 x gift certificate 2 tank dive	12493
Pelican Tours	2 x Gift certificate Catamaran Cruises	05610
Palm Tours	2x gift certificate Palm Island	04386
Palm Tours	2x gift certificate Sunset Sail	04206
Florist BY Wilson	1x gift certificate for flowers and decorations	04351
Setar	SAMSUNG GOOGLE NEXUS i9250 incl. sim card	05652
Butterfly farm	6 tickets for 2 persons	06621
Skydive Aruba	1x gift certificate Sky Dive on Aruba	06032
Westin	1x dinner certificate	09910
Rentga Car- Amigoe	1x gift certificate 1 day rental of a JEEP	07604
Surfside Marina	1x gift certificate weekend stay incl. breakfast	06988
Marriott Hotel	1x gift certificate Brunch for two	00412
Bushiri Karting	1x gift certificate	00403
Bushiri Karting	1x gift certificate	12240
Bushiri Karting	1x gift certificate	00229
JADS Dive Center	1x gift certificate introduction dive	06398
JADS Dive Center	1x gift certificate introduction dive	09439
JADS Dive Center	1x gift certificate introduction dive	00699
JADS Dive Center	1x gift certificate introduction dive	08965
JADS Dive Center	1x gift certificate introduction dive	01215



HOSTARIA DA' VITTORIO

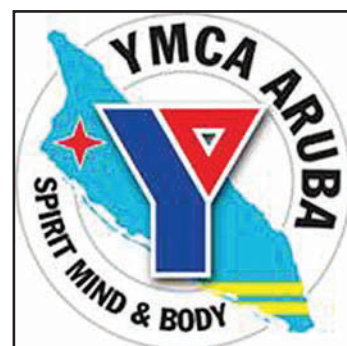
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Buy a YMCA raffle ticket and give a helping hand to the community



kindly asked to give their support to a good cause and buy these tickets from the youngsters and the different Youth Service Club representatives at the different places where they will be stationed on the island.

Anyone intersted to help YMCA by selling tickets can call 5845303 or 5831301.

As a build up to YMCA Aruba's grand annual fundraising event on June 1st, a raffle will be sold during these coming weeks.

Members of YMCA, accompanied by different Youth Service Clubs will be present at supermarkets and other spots which are known to be busy areas selling tickets for the YMCA Raffle.

This raffle is part of the activities held for YMCA's annual Telethon, which is organized to gain funds to keep on working for the community.

The raffle will be only Afl. 5, for which one can win spectacular prizes, such as cellular phones, televisions and various gift certificates from different stores and supermarkets on the island.

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Cas Animal Cont'd Party hearty for a good cause: Frogs for Dogs!

Senor Frog's in Palm Beach invites one and all to join them this Wednesday evening, May 16, to party hearty while helping Aruba's stray dogs in their special Frogs for Dogs fundraising event. This is on the eve of Ascension Day, which is an official holiday on Aruba, so many need not be concerned about working with a hang-over; they will have a full day to recover from all the fund and fundraising.

Cas Animal is an island foundation which rescues stray, unwanted and abused dogs. Founder Kirstin Arndt has turned her home into a strictly no-kill shelter, where now 100 homeless dogs reside. She has dedicated the last five years of her life to building a proper shelter. She has the land, the plan and is ready to break ground. Unfortunately, her animal ambulance broke down and is beyond repair; despite Topcar being generous in the arrangement for a new truck the Senor Frog's fundraiser is needed to help pay for it.

The evening full of fun and excitement begins at 5:00

frog's for dogs

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Senor Frog's is also offer-

ing a 15% discount on all food orders, and a percentage of the money spent between

5 and 8 will go to Cas Animal Foundation. Through the evening there will be raffles for great prizes, some come join the fund and help Cas Animal help Aruba's strays. A 5 florin entrance fee awards each patron with a raffle ticket, more can be purchased with 2 florins and each 10 florins order of food or beverage will earn another raffle ticket. Great prizes include dinners for two at various local restaurants.

Along with this initiation Cas Animal reminds dog owners that the distemper epidemic is still in full force. If you see a dog on the street you suspect has distemper, with discharge from the eyes and nose, or both, call Kiki at 742-8732 and she will take it to the vet and attempt to save it, if possible; even if not, it will help stem the spread of the disease. This has been her mission in life since coming to live on Aruba 15 years ago and warns owners to see their beloved pets have had their vaccinations, and keep an eye out for any dogs allowed to run loose around the neighbor-

hood.

Feeding and veterinary care for all the dogs in the shelter is astronomical; if anyone wishes to help, they can support her cause by donations in the form of payment to the Cas Animal Foundation account at the Contreras Veterinary Clinics in Shaba or Savaneta, or to Animal Care Clinic in Paradera, phone number 582-8382, as well as making donations directly to the foundation's account: Cas Animal Foundation, CMB Bank account # 25762110.

If you are not an island resident and wish to adopt a dog, Kiki has many that could use a good home and will assist you in the process, as it is much easier to return to the U.S. with an Aruban dog than you might think. They require examination and certification by a qualified vet to pass quarantine standards prior to departure; Kiki will also help in obtaining a dog transport and getting them to the airport, if needed.

Rosalie Klein

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TUESDAY AND FRIDAY: LIVE MUSIC

International News

China, Japan, S. Korea warn N. Korea off atom test

BEIJING (AFP) - China, Japan and South Korea warned North Korea Sunday they will not tolerate further nuclear tests, the South Korean president said, amid fears that Pyongyang is preparing a third atomic blast.

"Our three countries agreed that we will not accept further nuclear tests or further provocations from North Korea," Lee Myung-Bak told reporters after meeting with his two counterparts for 90 minutes to decide to start free-trade area negotiations before the end of this year.

Fears of a third North Korean nuclear test have grown after a failed rocket launch by Pyongyang last month that the United States and its allies said was a disguised ballistic missile test banned under UN resolutions.

Satellite photos have recently shown work in progress at the Punggye-ri nuclear test site.

Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda called on the three countries to strengthen co-operation in order to "further prevent provocations" by North Korea in future.

Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao warned earlier Sunday that the region faced many "unstable" factors that made the situation hard to predict.

China, long the North's key ally, has been an advocate of seeking to put a stop to the isolated regime's nuclear ambitions via multilateral talks.

The three leaders also agreed to start talks this year on a free-trade area, saying it would boost the economies of the entire region.

The issue has been on the trilateral agenda for the past decade, beginning with an agreement among the three in late 2002 to launch a feasibility study on a free-trade area.

Wen said closer regional economic integration, in response to a slow global recovery

and an overall rise in trade protectionism, would help unlock new growth potential.

China, Japan and South Korea combined would have the world's largest economy - ahead of the European Union -- when measured by purchasing power parity, which takes into account differences in living costs across nations.

"Today, as we look at the global financial crisis, some countries are still pursuing protectionist ideas and have expanded them," South Korea's Lee said.

In Sunday's meeting, the three nations also signed an investment agreement concluded earlier this year after 13 rounds of negotiations stretching over five years.

Later in the day, Wen met Noda for bilateral talks, with both sides pledging to push ties between the world's second- and third-largest economies further.

Uganda captures high-ranking Lord's Resistance Army member

DJEMA - Central African Republic, (AFP) - Ugandan troops have captured a senior member of the Lord's Resistance Army in a milestone arrest that could signal they are closing in on notorious rebel leader Joseph Kony.

The Ugandan army is leading a US-backed African Union force tasked with capturing the LRA's leaders, several of whom are wanted for war crimes by the International Criminal Court in The Hague.

The rebel commander, Caesar Acellam, was captured Saturday and made available at an army base a day later to confirm his arrest following a brief firefight near the border

with the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Acellam is considered the fourth-highest ranking member of the LRA.

The top three commanders are Okot Odhiambo, Dominic Ongwen and Kony. All are at large and wanted by the International Criminal Court along with another man, Vincent Otti, who is however thought to be dead.

"He's a big fish," Ugandan army spokesman Felix Kulayigye said of Acellam, who was captured along with a Ugandan woman, a teenager and a baby. None of them was hurt in the arrest.

Kony started his rebellion in northern Uganda more than

two decades ago, but has since been chased to the jungles of neighbouring central African states.

His global notoriety soared over the past year through Internet video campaign "Kony 2012" which has been watched tens of millions of times since it was posted online by the US advocacy group Invisible Children.

The video was criticised by some who said it oversimplified the root causes of the LRA's devastating insurgency.

Kony is wanted by the ICC for rape, mutilation and murder of civilians, as well as forcibly recruiting children to serve as soldiers and sex slaves.

Top Afghan peace negotiator shot dead in Kabul

KABUL (AFP) - A senior Afghan peace negotiator and close ally of President Hamid Karzai was shot dead Sunday, dealing a major blow to Kabul's efforts to broker peace with Taliban insurgents.

Arsala Rahmani, a former minister in the Taliban regime, was a "key negotiator" in the High Peace Council (HPC) established by Karzai to hold talks with the insurgents.

The Taliban, who have waged a decade-long insurgency aimed at toppling Karzai's government, threatened earlier this month to target members of the HPC as part of their "spring offensive".

Tributes to Rahmani and condemnation of his killing poured in from President Hamid Karzai, neighbouring Pakistan, the UN, the US embassy and NATO's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF).

Pakistan is accused by the

US and the Afghan government of harbouring Taliban leaders. But the foreign ministry said in a statement: "Our two countries face the common threat of terrorism, and Pakistan is committed to work closely with Afghanistan to eliminate this scourge."

The HPC was established by Karzai in 2010 to negotiate peace with the Taliban and other insurgents waging war against his administration and some 130,000 US-led NATO troops.

Rahmani "had recently established contacts with senior Taliban leaders", a senior security official told AFP, requesting anonymity because he was not authorised to speak to the media.

The Taliban have publicly rejected Karzai's calls for peace, calling him a puppet of the Americans and insisting on the complete withdrawal of Western troops.



PAKISTAN : In this handout photograph released by the Inter Service Public Relations, Pakistani army chief General Ashfaq Kayani (C) stands for photographs along with US Marines General John Allen (3L), the top US commander in Afghanistan, and Afghan army chief General Sher Muhammad Karimi (3R) and other delegates at the garrison city of Rawalpindi on May 13, 2012. The commander of NATO-led forces in Afghanistan met Pakistan and Afghanistan army chiefs on May 13 for talks on border security, almost six months after US airstrikes killed 24 Pakistani soldiers.

AFP PHOTO



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International News

Romney adamantly rejects same-sex marriage

Continued from pg 1

Romney, who did not directly refer to gays or lesbians, had previously voiced opposition to gay marriage, although he has also stated same-sex couples should have some rights such as child adoption.

But Saturday's speech was his unbowed rebuttal in a week dominated by Obama's landmark endorsement of gay marriage, and the Republican hopeful sought to set himself apart from the president in the run up to November's election.

"Central to America's rise to global leadership is our Judeo-Christian tradition, with its vision of the goodness and possibilities of every life," he said in a speech punctuated with references to God.

"Take those away, or take them for granted, and so many things can go wrong in a life. Keep them strong, and so many things will go right."

Romney, a former governor of Massachusetts and venture capitalist with a personal fortune estimated at more than \$250 million, also moved to rebut his image among some voters as a corporate suit who puts profit before people.

"I have never once regretted missing a business opportunity so that I could be with my children and grandchildren," he said, while also re-

ferring to his wife Ann, a homemaker who is often by his side on the campaign trail.

"Among the things in life that can be put off, being there when it matters most isn't one of them," he said, while seeking to tap into a sense among many evangelicals and the Catholic church establishment that Obama is riding roughshod over the constitutionally guaranteed freedom of religion.

"It strikes me as odd that the free exercise of religious faith is sometimes treated as a problem, something America is stuck with instead of blessed with," said Romney, a Mormon.

Virginia is a key battleground in the November 6 presidential election.

Last year, pastor Robert Jeffress, a leader of the Southern Baptist Convention, the largest evangelical movement in the United States, dismissed Mormonism as "a theological cult."

But a new poll by Religious News Survey shows that such doubts about Romney might be waning among some core conservatives, with the presumptive Republican nominee enjoying a huge 68-19 percent lead over Obama among white evangelicals.

Merkel suffers major setback in German state vote

BERLIN (AFP) - Voters in a crucial German state emphatically punished Chancellor Angela Merkel's pro-austerity party Sunday, awarding her main centre-left rivals a major boost ahead of 2013 national elections.

While Germans nationally back Merkel and her tough stance on European belt tightening and debt reduction, voters in the bellwether state of North Rhine-Westphalia plumped for the opposition's more growth-oriented approach.

The western state, home to the Ruhr industrial heartland with large cities such as Duesseldorf and Cologne, is Germany's most populous with 18 million people, and closely watched as a taste of things to come at federal level.

A week after voters in Greece and France baulked at austerity measures, prompting a warning by Merkel against "growth on credit", her conservative Christian Democratic Union (CDU) saw its worst ever result in NRW state with about 25.7 percent, according to preliminary results.

However, its pro-austerity, pro-business coalition partners at the federal level, the Free Democratic Party

(FDP), confirmed a reversal in its fortunes, after a string of humiliating defeats.

Hard on the heels of its better-than-expected result last Sunday in Schleswig-Holstein state, the FDP took about 8.5 percent, significantly better than the around three percent it is polling nationally.

Headed by the popular incumbent state premier Hannelore Kraft, the centre-left Social Democrats (SPD), who had been in a minority state coalition government with the Green ecologists, scored more than 38 percent, according to preliminary results.

The two parties looked set to again form a coalition, although with a majority this time.

The upstart Pirate party continued its winning streak with more than seven percent, gaining entry into the state parliament for the first time, the fourth regional parliament it has now entered since September.

"The defeat is bitter and it really hurts," said the CDU's main contender Norbert Roettgen, who is also Merkel's environment minister.

He had faced off against Kraft in the poll, which was triggered after the minority state government unexpectedly fell when the regional parliament failed to pass a draft budget after just 22

months in power.

"We put people at the centre," Kraft said after the preliminary results.

"The minute the polling stations close... the election campaign for the 2013 legislative polls will begin," the mass circulation Bild newspaper commented Sunday.

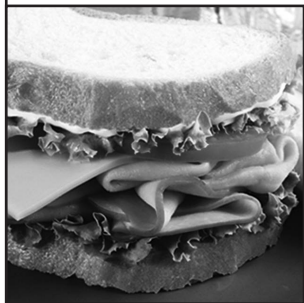
The vote was the third regional election in Germany in eight weeks and comes a week after Merkel's centre-right coalition lost power in the state of Schleswig-Holstein.

Merkel plans to fight for a third term in elections due in late 2013.



INDIA, Amritsar : An Indian Hindu devotee walks with a trident devoting in her tongue known as Trishula during a procession to honour the Hindu goddess Maha Mariamman in Amritsar on May 13, 2012. Devotees believe that the goddess protects whoever worships her. AFP PHOTO

British town of Sandwich celebrates 250 years of sandwiches



LONDON (AFP) - The British town of Sandwich on Sunday staged a dramatic re-enactment of the moment when the town's earl was said to have invented the sandwich, to mark the 250th anniversary of the bread-based meal. Dressed in 18th-century costume, actors recreate the night when the John Montagu, the fourth Earl of Sandwich -- a rapacious card-player -- "called for a slice of beef between two toasted pieces of bread so that he could carry on gaming uninterrupted", said a website for the event. Legend states that others began asking for "the same as Sandwich!" and thus named what was to become a classic foodstuff. The southeastern English port town is also holding a sandwich-making competition and concerts of the "bawdy and lively tunes" favoured by the earl, who also had a "pen-

chant for dressing in Turkish robes", the website said. The current earl will host a huge sandwich lunch in tribute to "the fourth earl of Sandwich who, 250 years ago, had his masterly inspiration in creating the universal fast food the world knows and loves," a poster said. Historians are sceptical of the claim that the earl actually invented the sandwich, arguing it belongs to a long line of bread-based snacks stretching back much further than the 18th century, but this has not stopped the town from celebrating its local hero.



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Health & Living

Botox may soon be used in UK to treat migraine



LONDON (AFP) - Botox may soon become an NHS-approved remedy for chronic migraine in England and Wales, following a recommendation by the health watchdog.

The toxins known as Botox are famous for their use in cosmetic treatments, to fill soft tissue and remove wrinkles.

But the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) announced on Friday that its appraisal committee is backing the use of Botox injections for migraine sufferers for whom

other treatments have not worked.

Thousands of people across Britain suffer from chronic migraine, defined by the regulatory body as headaches on at least 15 days per month of which at least eight days are with migraine. The organisation estimates that chronic migraines afflict around 1.6 percent of adults.

"Chronic migraines are extremely debilitating and can significantly affect a person's quality of life," said Professor Carole Longson,

director of the health technology evaluation centre at NICE.

"We are pleased that the committee has been able to recommend Botox as a preventative therapy for those adults whose headaches have not improved despite trying at least three other medications and whose headaches are not caused by medication overuse."

NICE had been asked to advise the NHS on whether Botox, known chemically as botulinum toxin type A and manufactured by Allergan, would provide value for money in treating chronic migraine in England and Wales.

The appraisal committee has come out in favour of the treatment after obtaining more information and analyses from Allergan.

Longson said: "We have published our final draft guidance so that registered stakeholders can highlight any factual errors or appeal against our provisional

Taiwan Buddhist animal rites 'killing millions'

TAIPEI, Taiwan (AFP) - Tens of millions of animals, mostly fish and birds, are dying every year in Taiwan because of so-called "mercy releases" by Buddhists trying to improve their karma, according to animal welfare activists.

The government is now planning to ban the practice, saying it damages the environment and that a large proportion of the 200 million or so creatures released each year die or are injured due to a lack of food and habitat.

Around 750 such cere-

monies are carried out in Taiwan each year, according to the Environment and Animal Society of Taiwan.

Negotiations have seen some groups agreeing to halt the practice, but others have yet to accept a ban, Lin Kuochang, an official from the government's Council of Agriculture, told AFP on Sunday.

Proposed amendments to current wildlife protection laws would see offenders facing up to two years in jail or fined up to Tw\$2.5 million (\$85,000) for such unauthorised releases, he said.

Cuba's Raul Castro backs gay rights: daughter



HAVANA (AFP) - Cuban President Raul Castro backs greater gay rights and ending discrimination against homosexuals, his daughter Mariela, a famed sexologist, said on week-end during a colorful gay rights march in Havana attended by about 400 transvestites as part of festivities marking the Fifth Cuban Day Against Homophobia.

"He has done some advocacy work, speaking of the need to make progress in terms of rights based on sexual orientation and gender identity," Mariela Castro told reporters.

"The Cuban president... has been talking about this issue, but he has not made it public. It is surely part of his strategy," she added, when asked if her father backed her campaign to legalize civil unions for gays and lesbians.

Mariela Castro runs Cuba's National Center for Sex Education (CENESEX) and is an out-

spoken advocate for the rights of homosexuals and transsexuals in Communist-ruled Cuba.

She is pushing for passage of legislation that would legalize same-sex unions, but stops short of endorsing gay marriage. She is hopeful that lawmakers will take up the bill sometime this year.

In January, Cuba's Communist Party Congress resolved "to fight against all forms of discrimination, including against sexual discrimination, and discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and sexual identity."

"It's a hugely important first step," Mariela Castro said earlier this week.

Traditionally stigmatized in Cuba, homosexuality was fiercely repressed for many years by the regime, which interned homosexuals in work camps in the 1960s and ostracized them in the 1970s under the rule of Fidel Castro.



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Sci-Tech

Social media's impact on kids 'merits big debate'



(AFP) - Facebook's big stock offering on Wall Street must be followed by an intensive debate on Main Street about social media's powerful impact on children, an expert on the topic says.

Jim Steyer, founder of Common Sense Media, a San Francisco think tank focusing on media and families, said the technology that Facebook represents is having "an enormous impact" on youngsters, families and schools worldwide.

"We need to have a big national, if not global conversation about the pros and cons of that," Steyer, a father of four who is also a civil rights lawyer and Stanford University professor, told AFP in an interview.

While social media such as Facebook, Google Plus and

Twitter offer "extraordinary possibilities" in such areas as education, he said, "there are also real downsides in a social, emotional and cognitive development way."

"Hopefully, after the flurry of the IPO and after the valuation of Facebook is done, then we can have a very serious ongoing discussion of what this means," he said.

Steyer was in Washington to promote his just-published book "Talking Back to Facebook: The Common Sense Guide to Raising Kids in the Digital Age," which argues for greater parental involvement in their children's online lives.

"Whether we like it or not, kids are now spending far more time with media and technology than they are with their families or in school," -- as

much as eight hours a day on average in the United States alone, he wrote.

Children face the triple peril of what Steyer calls RAP -- relationship issues, attention and addiction problems, and privacy issues -- as well as cyberbullying, online pornography and, for girls, body image fears.

Steyer is particularly critical of Silicon Valley tycoons -- he knows many on a first-name basis -- who, unbridled by government regulation, insist that privacy no longer matters in an increasingly interconnected world.

Earlier this week, a Consumer Reports survey found nearly 13 million US Facebook users -- out of 157 million, and 900 million worldwide -- do not use, or are not aware of, the site's privacy controls.

By way of advice to parents, he recommended "personal technology time-outs" and banning smartphones at the dinner table. "Meal time should not be tech time," he said. Children must also be taught to reflect before hitting the "send" button on something they might later regret, refrain from anonymous comments, and not to believe everything they read or see online.

Amazon conjures rights to borrow Harry Potter ebooks

(AFP) - Amazon said it has signed a deal for the electronic

books rights to all seven Harry Potter titles in English, French,

Italian, German and Spanish for its Kindle lending library.

The deal allows subscribers of the Amazon Prime service, which requires an annual subscription, to borrow the electronic versions of best-selling JK Rowling books.

Amazon said it inked the exclusive license with J.K. Rowling's Pottermore website to make the titles available to its customers via the Kindle e-reader.

But the deal only allows for borrowing of the ebooks, with Pottermore remaining the only place to buy the electronic versions.

The Amazon lending library has now grown to over 145,000 books that can be borrowed for free as frequently as once a month, with no due dates.

Books are borrowed to read on a Kindle device, and customers can have one book out at a time. When customers want to borrow a new book, any borrowed book can be returned from their device.



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Twitter users given legal warning in Britain

(AFP) - The Internet is not a law-free zone, the government's top law officer warned Twitter users, adding that he would not hesitate to take action over offending posts.

Attorney General Dominic Grieve, the government's chief legal advisor in England and Wales, spoke out following a series of high-profile court cases involving postings made on the micro-blogging site.

"If somebody goes down to the pub with printed sheets of paper and hands it out, that's no different than if somebody goes and does a tweet," Grieve told BBC radio.

"The idea that you have immunity because you're an anonymous tweeter is a big mistake."

"I don't want to take action but if I think it is necessary to prevent crime, such as racially aggravated harassment, then I won't hesitate to do it."

A student who mocked English Premier League footballer Fabrice Muamba on Twitter after he collapsed on the pitch with a heart attack in March was jailed for 56 days after admitting a racially aggravated public order offence.



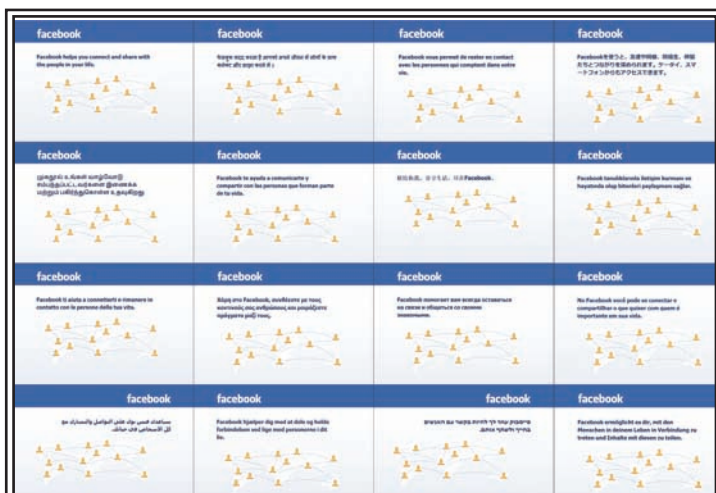
English Premier League footballer Fabrice Muamba, pictured here on May 2

Some 17 arrests have been made in connection with the alleged naming on Twitter of the woman that Wales footballer Ched Evans was last month convicted of raping.

In March, former New Zealand cricketer Chris Cairns won a libel action against ex-Indian Premier League chairman Lalit Modi in the first libel action heard in England against a post on Twitter.

Judge David Bean dismissed match-fixing allegations levelled against the cricketer, leaving Modi facing a bill of more than £500,000 (\$800,000).

Grieve said the government did not need to create new laws as existing ones already make it illegal to "grossly offend" or "cause distress".



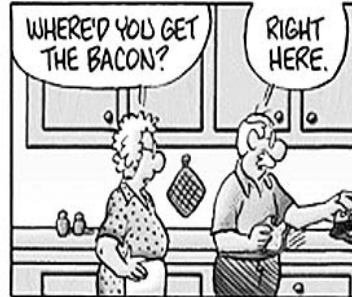
PARIS - France ; Combo made of screenshots of the homepage of Facebook in 16 different languages in Paris. Facebook, already assured of becoming one of the most valuable US firms when it goes public on May 18, 2012 now must convince investors in the next two weeks that it is worth all the hype. Facebook has more than 900 million active users. With 157 million members, the United States has the most Facebook users, followed by India with 45.9 million, Brazil with 45.3 million, Indonesia with 42.4 million and Mexico with 32.9 million. Languages in the combo are from (L to R, top row to bottom row): English, Hindi, French, Japanese, Tamil, Spanish, Chinese, Turkish, Italian, Greek, Russian, Portugese, Arabic, Danish, Hebrew and German.

AFP PHOTO



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COMICS



CROSSWORD



CROSSWORD

ACROSS

1. Nile serpent
4. Have a flu symptom
8. Dam-building gp.
11. Fergie's daughter
12. Earthenware fragment
14. Craving
15. Lend an ____
16. Chair seat maker
17. Fastener
18. Exchanged
20. "____ Gay" (plane)
22. ____ Andreas fault
23. Weld
25. Duck hunter's shelter

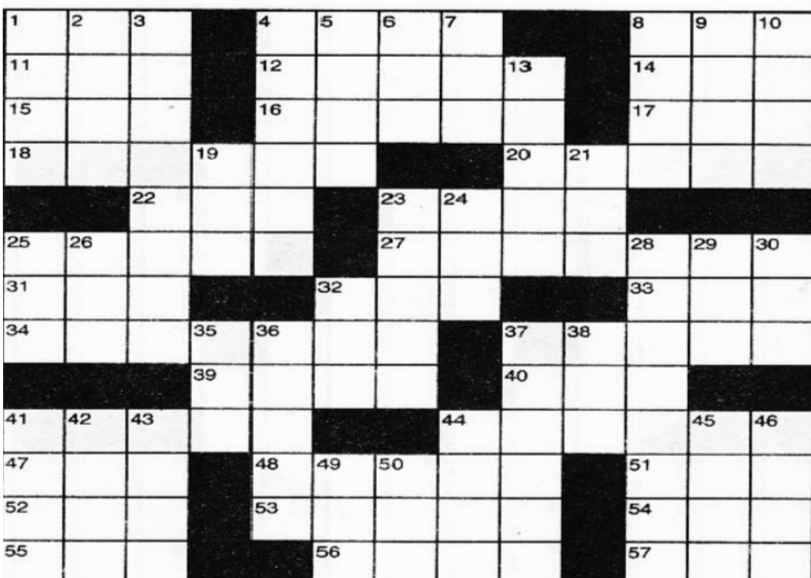
27. Alleges
31. Major engineering school (abbr.)
32. Capone et al.
33. Barely get by
34. Garden workers
37. Or else (2 wds.)
39. Gambler's cubes
40. Regret greatly
41. Enjoyed the slopes
44. Scorched
47. Shallow baking pan

48. Cowgirl Dale
51. Bunyan's tool
52. Common abbr.
53. Musical comedy
54. None too bright
55. "Oh, give ____ home..." (2 wds.)
56. Typewriter keys
57. Ike's theater

DOWN

1. Help
2. Scorch
3. Leech
4. Go up

5. African nation
6. Solo of "Star Wars"
7. Sooner than, in poetry
8. Proofreader's concern, for short
9. Bride's cover
10. "____ Christie"
13. Bridesmaid's purchase
19. Aykroyd of "Coneheads"
21. Formerly named
23. Spurious
24. Ocean vessel inits.
25. German car inits.
26. Fibber's tale
28. Traitor
29. Boxing abbr.
30. Immovable
32. Circle part
35. Ike's inits.
36. Downy duck
37. Spring flowers
38. Gaiety
41. Part of a pipe
42. Flying toy
43. Andes native
44. Treat with contempt
45. Stage direction
46. Car dealer's model
49. Animal doc
50. Ex of Artie and Mickey



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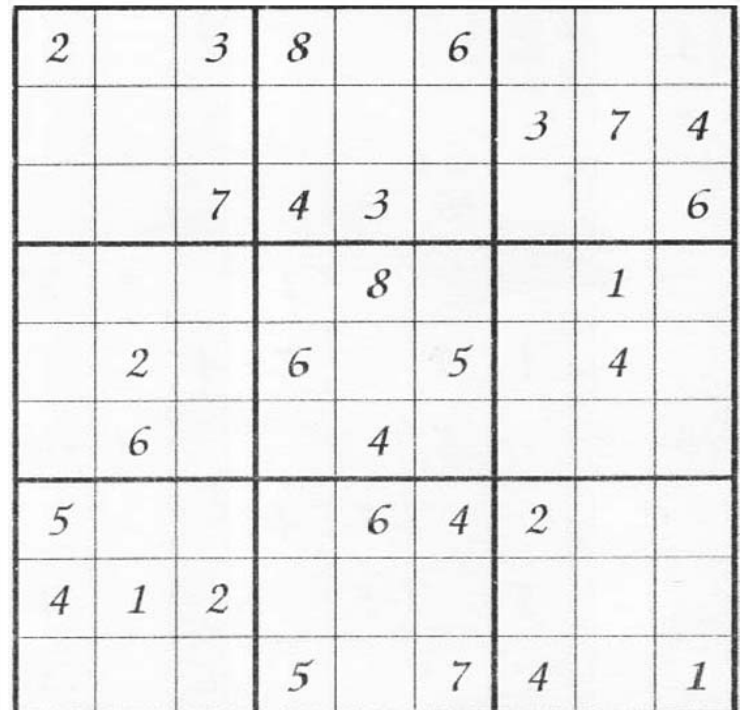
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Sudoku



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1	6	7	4	2	5	9	8	3
2	9	5	8	6	3	7	1	4
3	8	2	7	9	1	6	5	4
4	3	1	5	7	6	8	2	9
5	1	9	2	8	7	4	6	3
6	2	8	1	3	4	5	9	7
7	4	6	5	3	1	8	9	2
8	5	1	9	2	8	7	4	6
9	7	3	6	4	9	1	2	5

Complete the grid so that every row and every column contains the numbers 1 through 9. A number is Never repeated in a row or column. In addition every rectangle must contain the numbers 1 through 9



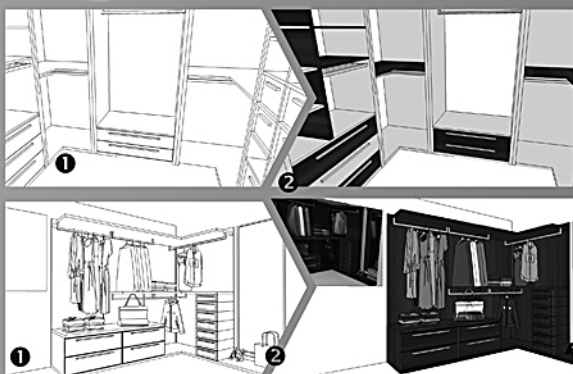
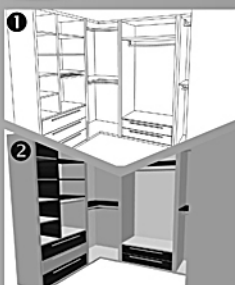
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Finance

Yahoo! chief steps down

SAN FRANCISCO (AFP) - Yahoo! announced Sunday that Ross Levinsohn will temporarily replace chief executive Scott Thompson, who has stepped down in the face of controversy about his allegedly inflated resume.

The California-based company, in a compromise with activist investor Daniel Loeb, said Fred Amoroso

would take charge of the board of directors as the struggling Internet pioneer seeks its sixth new chief in as many years.

"Yahoo! has been struggling over recent years and this new incident only makes matters worse for the company," said technology industry analyst Jeff Kagan.

"Yahoo! rode the wave up

during the last decade, but during the last several years has crossed over the top and has been heading down the other side."

The changes are part of a settlement with Loeb's hedge fund Third Point, which is waging a proxy battle at the Sunnyvale, California-based firm.

Under the terms of the truce, Loeb and two of his picks -- Harry Wilson and Michael Wolf -- will take seats on the Yahoo! board Wednesday.

Five current board members, including director Roy Bostock and Patti Hart, will step down immediately and not end their terms at this year's annual shareholders meeting as originally planned, according to Yahoo!

Digging with hope!



Genove Valcimon 70, right, plays music using his shovel as laborers work to his rhythm as they build a road that will lead to an exploratory drill site in the department of Trou Du Nord, Haiti. Haiti's land may yet hold the solution to centuries of poverty: there is gold hidden in its hills, and silver and copper too. Now, two mining companies are drilling around the clock to determine how to get those metals out, and how much it might cost.

SATURDAY'S Crossword Answer

HAT UNCAP ETA
ITE NOSIR LIL
PECULIARITIES
SOS SSW
ANACIN MIAM
EVE KEEP SLIT
AARP SVU TINS
VIVA TERM NEA
ELENA RIOTED
IDO TUE
FORCEDLANDING
BAM POINT ARM
IRS TRESS MAC



Current as of: 05/12/2012	Currency Code	Buying rate banknotes	Buying Cheques	Selling Rate
U.S.A.	USD	1.77	1.78	1.80
Dutch Antilles	ANG	98.00	100.00	100.20
Canada	CAD	1.75	1.77	1.79
Britain	GBP	2.80	2.85	2.91
Switzerland	CHF	191.77	192.49	193.29
Netherlands	EUR	228.45	230.54	232.86
Sweden	SEK	24.67	25.39	26.19
Denmark	DKK	30.05	30.77	31.57
Norway	NOK	29.44	30.16	30.96
Japan (per 100)	JPY	220.77	222.79	225.03

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JPMorgan chief admits bank's 'credibility' at stake

WASHINGTON (AFP) - JPMorgan Chase CEO Jamie Dimon admitted yesterday that a \$2 billion loss on derivatives trades had jeopardized the bank's credibility and given regulators a fresh opportunity to target Wall Street.

Dimon told NBC's "Meet the Press" program that the big loss incurred by the New York-based bank, which triggered a slide in banking shares on Friday, was damaging, but not bad enough to stop the company making a profit.

The Wall Street boss has led US banks in fighting the application of the new Volcker Rule, named after former Federal Reserve chairman Paul Volcker, which would ban so-called proprietary trading, when banks trade on their own accounts. Banks are also resisting proposed curbs on their hedging activities.

Asked if JPMorgan's losses had given regulators new ammunition to clamp down on Wall Street after the US government bail out of several financial institutions during the 2008 crisis, Dimon replied: "Yes, absolutely. This is a very unfortunate and inopportune time to have had this kind of mistake."

He denied that the unexpected losses from a hedging scheme -- designed to lower investment risk, but which spectacularly backfired -- had placed the company in jeopardy, though unwanted ramifications could follow.

"It's a question of size. This is not a risk that is life-threatening to JPMorgan," said Dimon, who late Thursday told analysts that the loss could increase to \$3 billion through the end of June due to market volatility.

"This is a stupid thing that we should never have done, but we're still going to earn a lot of money this quarter. So, it isn't like the company is jeopardized."

"We hurt ourselves and our credibility yes, and we've got to fully expect and pay the price for that."

The interview with Dimon was conducted Friday after JPMorgan shares closed down 9.3 percent, wiping \$14 billion off the market value of the bank.

Spanish banks announce new provisions following reforms

MADRID (AFP) - Three top Spanish banks -- Santander, CaixaBank and Bankia -- Sunday said they would set aside some 10 billion euros in additional funds this year to meet new government reforms on risky assets. Santander, the biggest eurozone bank by market capitalisation, said it would set aside an additional 2.7 billion euros. Bankia, which is being partly nationalised, said it would set aside 4.7 billion, and CaixaBank, the country's third largest, will provision 2.1 billion more this year. And the Banca Civica, whose merger with CaixaBank was announced in March, will provision an additional 1.2 billion euros, CaixaBank said.

On Friday, the Spanish government announced drastic reforms forcing banks to set up a new 30-billion-euro financial cushion and to remove risky property assets from their accounts. Many of the banks were badly hit by the 2008 collapse of the housing market.

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Cannes festival slammed for all-male line-up

PARIS (AFP) - French feminists slammed the Cannes Film Festival for failing to include a single woman director in the line-up for the Palme d'Or top award that kicks off next week.

There are no female filmmakers among the 22 competing for the top award at the May 16-27 festival, and just two among the 17 in its new talent section "Un Certain Regard": France's Catherine Corsini and Sylvie Verheyde.

"All 22 films in the official selection were written, happy coincidence, by 22 men," the feminist group La Barbe (The Beard) wrote in a mordant op-ed article in the weekend edition of Le Monde newspaper.

"For its 65th edition, the festival will therefore crown for the 63rd time one among their ranks, defending without fail the virile values that are the pride of the film-making art."

New Zealand director Jane Campion is the only woman director in the history of the event to have won the Palme

d'Or, for "The Piano" in 1993.

An unprecedented number of women last year ran for the Palme d'Or, with France's Maïwenn, Australia's Julia Leigh, Scottish director Lynne Ramsay and Japan's Naomi Kawase taking hard looks at sex, violence and family life.

"Last year, no doubt it was an accident, four women managed to slip in among the 20 in the official competition," read the text.

"Sirs, you have returned to your senses and we thank you for that," read the ironic text. "This selection sends a strong signal to the profession and the public around the world."

"Whatever we do, we must not let young girls believe they could one day have the nerve to direct films and climb the steps of the festival palace other than on the arm of a prince charming."

When it comes to the glamour side of Cannes, the authors noted there was no shortage of feminine talent, with a string of female stars expected in

Cannes and "The Artist" star Berenice Bejo hosting the opening ceremony.

"Women make perfect hostesses," wrote the authors. "Let's spare them the worry of managing a film crew, the tough technical challenges of a film shoot."

One of the two directors selected in the new talent section this year, Verheyde brings the period drama "Confession of a Child of the Century" starring Charlotte Gainsbourg opposite the rocker Pete Doherty.

Corsini will show a film entitled "Three Worlds" about a young man whose world is turned upside down after an accident on his stag night.

Michael Caine given freedom of London borough

LONDON (AFP) - Oscar-winner Michael Caine Saturday received the freedom of the London borough of Southwark, where the veteran British actor grew up.

The 79-year-old received the honour in a ceremony at St George's Cathedral, not far from the Elephant and Castle district where he spent his childhood.

The honorary freedom of Southwark is given to individuals or organisations in recognition of their contribution to life in the borough.

"I've received awards before, but this is so personal, because it's about where I grew up," said Caine, known for his distinctive London accent.

"I come from here. I did my first acting in a youth club here, an amateur dramatic society. I'm part of what this place is."

Caine was knighted in 2000 for his services to drama.



FATIMA - Portugal, The Statue of Our Lady of Fatima is carried by believers during a mass at the shrine of Fatima, central Portugal on May 13, 2012. Thousands of pilgrims converged on Fatima Sanctuary to celebrate the anniversary of the Fatima miracle when three shepherd children claimed to have seen the Virgin Mary in May 1917. On May 13, 1917, a vision appeared to three shepherd children near the village of Fatima. On a cloud that hovered above an oak tree they saw the shining figure of a woman, 'a beautiful Lady from Heaven'. The lady told the children - Lucia, 10, Francisco, 9, and Jacinta, 7 - to meet her in the same place on the 13th of each month until October.

AFP PHOTO



VIENNA -This handout photo provided by the Westlicht Gallery on May 10, 2012 in Vienna -Austria, shows a Leica O series. The 1923 camera, number 116, fetched 2.16 million euros (\$2.79 million) at an auction on Saturday, setting a new world record for a camera. The buyer chose to remain anonymous.

AFP PHOTO/WESTLICHT GALLERY



SEOUL, REPUBLIC OF KOREA: A South Korean boy gets his head shaved by a Buddhist monk during a "Children Becoming Buddhist monks" ceremony at Jogye temple in Seoul on May 13, 2012. The 9 children will stay at the temple to learn about Buddhism for 20 days ahead of celebrations for Buddha's birthday on May 28 this year.

AFP PHOTO

Miss World Fiji dumped over age not race, says organiser



WELLINGTON, (AFP) - Fiji beauty queen Torika Watters, who was the target of racist criticism about her looks, has been replaced as the island nation's Miss World Pageant entrant, organisers were reported saying Sunday.

But they said the issue was her age and not connected to complaints that the 16-year-old of mixed European-Fijian heritage did not look Fijian enough.

Watters was chosen last month ahead of a field of indigenous women by a judging panel that including New Zealand supermodel Rachel Hunter, a former wife of Rod Stewart, and other non-Fijians.

The decision sparked uproar on the Miss World Fiji Facebook page with the criticisms including demands that the Fijian representative have a

"buiniga" -- the local word to describe the naturally-frizzy Fijian hairstyle.

Hundreds of complaints had to be deleted and a pageant spokeswoman said on Facebook there had been "nothing but negative criticism and remarks from our own people" about the selection of Watters.

Show promoter Andhy Blake announced over the weekend that Watters did not meet the Miss World requirement that contestants be at least 17 years old and she would be replaced by 24-year-old Koini Vakaloloma, the first runner-up.

In a statement to the Fiji Times, Watters referred to the "entire pageant fiasco" and said she was "proud of my identity as a Fijian and have never considered my people as racists."

Stradivarius violin played for pope in Vatican concert

VATICAN CITY (AFP) - Pope Benedict XVI was serenaded on Friday with a religious-themed classical concert conducted by Italian maestro Riccardo Muti featuring rare instruments, including a Stradivarius violin from 1720.

The concert in a hall in Vatican City in the shadow of Saint Peter's basilica was a traditional offering from Italian President Giorgio Napolitano to celebrate the seventh anniversary of music-loving Benedict's pontificate.

Muti directed the orchestra and choir of the Rome Opera in a performance of Antonio Vivaldi's Magnificat and Giuseppe Verdi's Stabat Mater and Te Deum.

Among the other instruments used were a viola from 1615 by Antonio and Girolamo Amati, as well as a violin by Giuseppe Guarneri del Gesù from 1731.

Napolitano, a former communist, met Benedict briefly before the concert and the two discussed the prospects for peace in the Middle East, the Vatican said.

Prime Minister Mario Monti, a practising Catholic, also attended.

Benedict plays the piano and often references classical music in his homilies and speeches. He praised Muti saying he had helped make more popular "a rich repertoire that expresses the Church's faith in music."

Gold Coast Aruba: Great savings for large families on holiday rentals



Aruba's newest and most innovative gated community has enjoyed steady sales since breaking ground, as many are finding the secure surroundings and outstanding amenities are just what they were looking for before considering purchasing property on the island. Some owners are using the villas or town homes as vacation retreats rather than full time and are taking advantage of Gold Coast's rental services to turn their investment into ready income.

"The greater portion of home owners are using their 'home away from home' in Aruba to escape the winter months, or spend holidays with the family on the island," noted Gold Coast developer Fito Croes. To assist in the demand for more complete facilities for groups and families, famed hotelier Ed Malone has been placed in charge of the rental program.

Staying at Gold Coast is a very attractive proposition for those traveling with groups that would require multiple hotel rooms. Two and three bedroom Villas or Town Homes accommodate large numbers and offer extensive amenities along with a final cost resulting in considerable savings. The community is minutes to the best beaches and all the casino action, and offers a quiet and secluded getaway with two swimming pools and specialized services with more on the way, such as a fitness room, tennis courts and mini-mall. Ed can arrange maid service, babysitters, caterers, airline pick-up

and drop-off; they even boast a shopping service to stock your shelves before arrival.

Gold Coast accommodations are elegant and spacious, offering privacy for parents or a few couples.

high-speed fiber-optic Internet connection, individual washer/dryer, and are fully air-conditioned. Cribs, high chairs and hair dryers are available for a modest fee. Concierge services to arrange



Beautifully appointed kitchens and bathrooms grace each abode; barbecues and lounges are provided for friendly cookouts and truly savoring the island life. All homes come with cable TV,

rental cars, spa appointments, activities and restaurant reservations are all part of the package.

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June 8 - July 1



Omens look positive for Greek assault on Euro



file photo April 2012 - Fernando Santos

ATHENS (AFP) - When Greece unexpectedly won the 2004 European Championships, they beat hosts Portugal in the opening group match and when the two sides met again in the final.

With Greece drawn against co-hosts Poland in Group A, they are now hoping that lightning will strike twice, as the teams play the opening match of the tournament in Warsaw on June 8.

"In our minds was Euro 2004," said striker Angelos Charisteas, who scored the winning goal when Greece beat Portugal to win the title and is one of several players still in the squad and keen to put their poor 2010 World Cup showing behind them.

Portuguese coach Fernando Santos, who took over from Otto Rehhagel after the disappointing performance in South Africa, has generated a more attacking team than the defensive-minded side under the German.

"Neither a Messi nor a Pele would have personal marking," said the 57-year-

old, who has had four spells coaching league sides in Greece and has recently seen his contract extended to 2014, with a 45 percent pay rise.

"We have our own identity and will not change for anyone. I will not follow the tactics of Rehhagel. I want them to say that Santos' national team is a compact group with its own identity. We want to dominate the game," he added.

Santos, who had a modest playing career that lasted just four years with Maritimo and Estoril, said he wanted his players to stick to the style of play that served them well in qualifying top of their group.

Santos, who guided Porto to the 1999 league title and to two Cup victories in 2000 and 2001, believes Group A, which also includes Russia and the Czech Republic that Greece beat in the 2004 semi-finals, is wide open.

"The group that we have been drawn in is passable, as all the teams have a 25 percent chance of advancing," he said.

"I don't believe in lucky or unlucky draws. Everything will be decided on the pitch. I have total trust in my players and I know they will be ready for the group stages."

While Santos has a core of experienced players at his disposal, he has also blooded plenty of emerging talent. But a 3-1 defeat in a friendly against Romania which ended a 16-match unbeaten run served as a wake-up call.

"When we go to Austria for training later this month, I will take with me players who conform to the team's tactics. This is the basic criteria," he said.

Santos, who will announce his squad to go an Austrian training camp on May 11, looks to have opted for Panathinaikos' goalkeeper Orestis Karnezis as first choice, with two attacking fullbacks in Olympiakos duo Vasilis Torosidis and Jose Cholembas.

In midfield, he has tried out two youngsters, Giorgos Fotakis and Giannis Fetfatzidis, but is more likely to call on grizzled veterans Kostas Katsouranis and team captain Giorgos Karagounis.

Charisteas remains in contention up front but Santos is expected to deploy wingers Giorgos Samaras -- fresh from winning the Scottish title with Celtic -- and Dimitris Salpingidis with Fanis Gekas as the target man as they seek a cutting edge.



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Guardiola says Villa recovering well

MADRID (AFP) - Barcelona and Spain striker David Villa is recuperating well, his club coach Pep Guardiola said Friday, but the forward faces a battle to make Euro 2012 after fracturing his tibia at last December's Club World Cup.

Spain coach Vicente Del Bosque last week admitted he is worried he may have to do without Villa -- who has scored 51 goals in 82 internationals -- given the star would not be match fit even if he can make the squad.

But Guardiola, who is step-

ping down at Barca at the end of this season, said there was some cause for optimism with the player now back in training.

"He is coming on very well. But the doctors are much more in a position to evaluate his chances of playing the Euro," Guardiola said.

"Everything is going well but he did suffer a serious injury -- we will see how things come along over the next few days," he added.

Del Bosque will name his final 23-man squad on May 27.

Euro dream over for Smalling after groin injury

LONDON (AFP) - Chris Smalling's hopes of breaking into England's Euro 2012 squad were dashed on Friday after the Manchester United defender was ruled out with a groin injury.

The versatile Smalling, regarded as one of the brightest prospects in English football, had been tipped for inclusion in Roy Hodgson's squad for his ability to offer options at right back and centre-back.

United manager Sir Alex Ferguson said a groin injury which flared up in last week-end's victory over Swansea was more serious than initially thought and meant he would

be unavailable for England duty.

"Chris has suffered a bad injury," said Ferguson.

"It is a groin muscle injury and he will miss the European Championships.

"We are assessing what to do at the moment but it is a bad injury."

Ferguson meanwhile confirmed striker Danny Welbeck would be available for this summer's tournament despite an ankle knock that had ruled him out of this week's trip to Sunderland.

"He is still out just now but he should be fit for the Euros," Ferguson said.

Puyol undergoes knee surgery

MADRID (AFP) - Barcelona captain Carles Puyol underwent successful surgery on his right knee on Saturday, the injury which has already ruled the veteran defender out of Euro 2012.

"Carles Puyol had an operation on Saturday morning. The Barcelona captain underwent arthroscopy to clean out the right knee," said a club statement.

Surgeons confirmed that the Spanish international will need six weeks to fully recover, ruling him out of Euro 2012 as well as the King's Cup final against Athletic Bilbao on May 25.

"The aim now is have him ready for the start of next season in the best possible condition," said club doctor Ricard Pruna.

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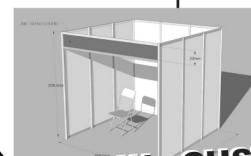
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NBA: Heat superstar James takes third MVP award



MIAMI (AFP) - Miami Heat star LeBron James was named the NBA's 2011-2012 season Most Valuable Player on Saturday, capturing the award for the third time in four years but the first time since joining the Heat in 2010.

James became only the eighth player to win the award three or more times, a list that includes six-time winner Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, five-time MVPs Michael Jordan and Bill Russell and four-timer Wilt Chamberlain.

James joins a list of three-time MVPs that includes Magic Johnson, Larry Bird and Moses Malone. But of all the players who have won the award three times or more, James is the only one never to have won an NBA title.

"I would give all three of them back for an NBA championship," James said. "It's my

main goal."

The Miami forward joins Chamberlain, Abdul-Jabbar and Malone as the only players to win the award representing two different clubs. James, in his ninth NBA season, won in 2009 and 2010 while playing for the Cleveland Cavaliers.

"Less than 10 years ago, I had dreams of being in the NBA. I had dreams of putting on

an NBA uniform," James said. "I never dreamed about being a Most Valuable Player."

James averaged 27.1 points, 7.9 rebounds and 6.2 assists in 62 games this season in his second campaign after signing with the Heat.

James finished with 1,074 points in voting by a media panel and NBA fans over the internet, including 85 first-place votes.

NBA scoring champion Kevin Durant of Oklahoma City was second with 889

points, including 24 first-place ballots, followed by Chris Paul of the Los Angeles Clippers on 385 points with six first-place nods.

Los Angeles Lakers guard Kobe Bryant was fourth with 352 points, including two first-place votes, and Frenchman Tony Parker, a star guard with the San Antonio Spurs, was fifth with 331 points and four first-place votes.

Last season, James led the Heat into the NBA Finals, where Miami lost to the Dallas Mavericks. This season, the Heat have reached the second round of the NBA playoffs.

James stressed the importance of team success as opposed to individual honors, enticing his teammates onto a stage at a ceremony in the Heat's home arena and praising them as the secret to his solo success.

"Even though, this is an individual award, it's not an individual award," James said. "The reason I'm up here is because of those guys. If those guys don't sacrifice what they sacrifice... I wouldn't be up here."

NBA: Paul powers Clippers past Memphis

MEMPHIS, (AFP) - Chris Paul finished with 19 points, nine rebounds and four assists as the Los Angeles Clippers eliminated the Memphis Grizzlies 82-72 in game seven of their Western Conference playoff Sunday.

It was the first game seven win in the club's 42-year history. The Clippers also recorded just their third ever playoff series win.

The Clippers advance to face the top-seeded San Antonio Spurs in the second round, beginning on Tuesday in Texas.

"I want the guys to enjoy this, and then we'll regroup tomorrow and focus in on that," Clippers coach Vinny Del Negro said. "But obviously another big challenge for us."

Los Angeles got a brilliant performance from their bench players down the stretch. The reserves scored 25 of their 27 fourth-quarter points as Kenyon Martin, Mo Williams and Nick Young combined for 33 points and 12 rebounds.

Rudy Gay and Marc Gasol scored 19 points apiece for the Grizzlies who missed all 13 of their three-point shots. Mike Conley shot a disappointing

two-of-13 from the field and the team managed to shoot a combined 32.5 percent (25-of-77).

"Unfortunately, no one on the bench stepped up and helped us," Memphis coach Lionel Hollins said.

The heavy use of the reserve players late in the game came at the expense of Clippers' rising star Blake Griffin who sat for the final minutes. Griffin, who injured his knee earlier in the series, finished with 28 minutes of playing time and was three-of-11 from the field. He had just four rebounds.

Los Angeles led by one point at the half, 39-38, after going on an 11-2 spurt halfway through the second quarter.

Memphis had a big run of their own in the first half by closing out the second quarter with a 15-6 offensive attack.

The Grizzlies had a chance to cut the deficit in the final two minutes when OJ Mayo stole the ball from Paul and raced down the court. But his layup missed and the Clippers regained possession of the ball.

The Clippers sank all six of their free throws in the final minute to seal the win.

MLB Standings

American League

East	W	L	Pct	GB
BALTIMORE	22	12	.647	--
TAMPA	20	14	.588	2.0
YANKEES	19	14	.576	2.5
TORONTO	19	15	.559	3.0
BOSTON	14	19	.424	7.5

Central

CLEVELAND	18	15	.545	--
DETROIT	16	17	.485	2.0
CHICAGO	16	18	.471	2.5
KANSAS	12	20	.375	5.5
MINNESOTA	9	24	.273	9.0

West

TEXAS	22	10	.647	--
OAKLAND	18	14	.529	4.0
LA ANGELES	15	18	.441	7.0
SEATTLE	15	18	.429	7.5

National League

East	W	L	Pct	GB
WASHINGTON	21	11	.636	--
ATLANTA	21	12	.618	0.5
NY METS	19	13	.576	2.0
MIAMI	17	15	.515	4.0
PHILADELPHIA	15	17	.441	6.5

Central

ST. LOUIS	20	13	.606	--
CINCINNATI	16	16	.500	3.5
MILWAUKEE	15	18	.455	5.0
HOUSTON	15	18	.455	5.0
PITTSBURG	15	18	.455	5.0
CHICAGO	13	20	.394	7.0

West

LA DODGERS	22	11	.667	--
SAN FRANCISCO	16	17	.485	6.0
ARIZONA	15	19	.441	7.5
COLORADO	13	19	.406	8.5
SAN DIEGO	12	22	.353	10.5

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NBA: Lakers edge Nuggets in series decider



LOS ANGELES : Kobe Bryant #24 of the Los Angeles Lakers goes up for a shot over Arron Afflalo #6 of the Denver Nuggets
AFP/Photo

LOS ANGELES (AFP) - The Los Angeles Lakers beat Denver 96-87 on Saturday to edge the Nuggets 4-3 in their first round series and reach the Western Conference semi-finals where they will face the Oklahoma City Thunder.

Pau Gasol finished with 23 points and 17 rebounds while Andrew Bynum had 16 points and 18 rebounds for the Lakers, who are 15-1 all-time in game seven home encounters.

Steve Blake scored 19 points and Kobe Bryant had a modest 17 points and eight assists for the Lakers. It was the first game in the series that Bryant did not lead the Lakers in scoring.

"We stayed together, we continued to fight and share the ball," said Lakers coach Mike Brown. "Our two bigs (Gasol and Bynum) were terrific. (Bynum) was all over the place."

Third-seeded Los Angeles also got 15 points from Metta World Peace in his return from a seven-game suspension.

The Lakers advance to play the second-seeded Thunder, who have had more than a week of rest after they swept the defending champion Dallas Mavericks in four games.

Game one of the second round series is today.

Unlike Bryant and Gasol, who have plenty of experience in game sevens, no player on the Nuggets' roster had ever taken part in a series decider before.

Al Harrington and Ty Lawson each scored 24 points for Denver, who fell just short of their first-ever postseason series victory over the Lakers. It would have made them only the ninth NBA team to win a series after trailing 3-1.

"We gave a valiant effort in the second half," said Denver coach George Karl. "The game was so physical. Their size won over our speed. We need to get stronger to beat this kind of team."

The Lakers led by as much as 16 points in the third before the Nuggets rallied to close the quarter on a 22-7 run.

The game was tied 78-78 in the fourth quarter but then Los Angeles scored 11 of the next 13 points to seal the victory.

World Peace was back in the lineup after being slapped with a seven-game ban for elbowing Oklahoma City's James Harden in a regular season contest between the two teams.



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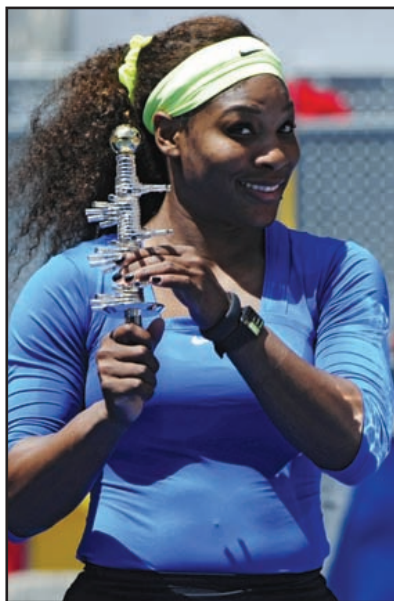
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Tennis: Federer, Serena wins Madrid Masters



MADRID (AFP) - Roger Federer put his best fighting tennis on display to produce a 3-6, 7-5, 7-5 victory over Tomas Berdych on Sunday to capture a third Madrid Masters title and depose Rafael Nadal as world number two.

The Swiss, with 16 Grand Slam titles, will now stand behind Novak Djokovic on the ATP list after sending Nadal back to third with his winning performance on the controversial blue clay laid down at the Caja Magica.

"I feel amazing," said Federer, who came through on his fourth match point as Berdych ploughed a forehand into the net.

The 30-year-old went level with Nadal on 20 career titles

at Masters 1000 level, with both men sharing the overall record.

Federer, playing in his 104th ATP final, won his 74th title and fourth of the season.

He now stands 11-4 in head-to-head encounters with Berdych, who had beaten him in three of their five most recent matches.

But Federer was having no more of that scenario as he turned in victory in just over two and a half hours with a dozen aces, 44 winners and 30 unforced errors.

Berdych saved three match points in the final game before going down.

"We both played a nice match, but Roger showed why he's the star," said the Czech. "He was able to win in the conditions, it was well done."

"It's a great feeling to win any event, but especially another here in Madrid," added Federer.

"This is a tough tournament. It was tough to move on the clay but you just get on with it and try to make the best of the situation."

"The level of play was good this week and I'm looking forward to the next few weeks."

In an unexpected post-match ceremony, American film star Will Smith came down from his spectator posi-



tion to present the winner with the suit he wore in his latest Men in Black film.

In Women category, The American Serena Williams crushed world number one Victoria Azarenka 6-1, 6-3 on Sunday to win the Madrid Open and make a return to the number six ranking.

Serena has now won back-to-back WTA clay titles, after claiming Charleston in the US a month ago, and hammered home her credentials as a serious threat at the French Open which begins in two weeks.

Williams has now won 13 consecutive clay court matches, including at the Fed Cup in April. She owns 41 career titles.

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